



1201 CONNECTICUT AVENUE, NW
Suite 500
WASHINGTON, DC 20036
Telephone: 202-496-1000
Facsimile: 202-496-1300

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SAUDI ARABIA | IN FOCUS

A WEEKLY PUBLICATION OF THE INFORMATION OFFICE OF
THE ROYAL EMBASSY OF SAUDI ARABIA IN WASHINGTON, DC



May 12, 2009

FOREIGN RELATIONS

GCC leaders gather in Riyadh for consultations

Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz hosted the 11th Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Consultative Summit in Riyadh March 5. The gathering was attended by top GCC officials, including Bahraini Crown Prince Sheikh Salman al-Khalifa, Omani Deputy Prime Minister Fahd al-Saeed, U.A.E. Vice-President Sheikh Mohammed Al-Makhtoum, Kuwaiti Emir Sheikh Sabah al-Sabah, and Qatari Emir Sheikh Hamad Al-Thani. Political, security and economic issues were reviewed.

At a press conference, GCC Secretary General Abdulrahman Al-Attiyah announced that Riyadh has been chosen as the headquarters for the new GCC Monetary Council. Addressing the impact of the global financial crisis on GCC countries, Al-Attiyah stated, "The economies of our countries are immune as certain measures have been taken by the GCC states, contributing to alleviating the repercussions of this crisis."

Arab Health Ministers meet in Riyadh to discuss swine flu

The Executive Bureau of the Council of Arab Health Ministers held an extraordinary session in Riyadh May 5 to discuss the swine flu outbreak. Addressing the gathering, Saudi Health Minister Dr. Abdullah Al-Rabeeah reported that Saudi Arabia has taken precautionary measures to confront the disease. An integrated national plan has been formulated, based on the recommendations of the World Health Organization (WHO). The Executive Bureau issued the "Riyadh Declaration" in which the ministers stressed the importance of integrating Arab efforts to confront swine flu.

SAUDI ARABIA - U.S.

Foreign Minister receives delegation of U.S. mayors

Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal received a delegation of U.S. mayors in the Riyadh on May 10. The delegation, led by Mayor Phil Gordon of Phoenix, includes the mayors of ten U.S. cities. Prince Saud and the American officials discussed ways of strengthening Saudi-U.S. cooperation. The trip was organized by the Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Washington in cooperation with the U.S. Conference of Mayors. The purpose of the visit is to strengthen Saudi-U.S. economic ties and to help American leaders better understand the politics and culture of a key ally in the Middle East.

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Saudi official hosts meeting of Energy City Mayors in Houston

Jamal Al-Mulhim, the Under Secretary for Reconstruction and Projects of Eastern

Province, convened a two-day meeting in Houston beginning May 5 that brought together the mayors of 14 "energy cities" around the world. The primary goal of the gathering was to promote the exchange of experience and information on energy-related fields. Among the cities represented at the meeting were Houston, Aberdeen, Calgary, Halifax, Perth, Malabo, Port Harcourt, San Fernando and Luanda.

FOREIGN AID

Saudi Arabia donates \$25 million to rebuild Nahr Al-Bared refugee camp

The Saudi Development Fund (SDF) signed an agreement in Amman May 6 with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) to finance the rebuilding of the Nahr el-Bared Palestinian refugee camp in northern Lebanon.

The SDF will provide a total of \$25 million to the agency. "The contribution of the Saudi Fund will complete financing for the reconstruction of the infrastructure and the housing units...thus enabling around 500 displaced families to return to their newly-reconstructed houses and businesses in the camp..." a statement from UNRWA said. The Nahr el-Bared refugee camp, home to 27,000 Palestinians, was destroyed in the summer of 2007 during fighting between the Lebanese Army and Palestinian militants.

CULTURE

Kingdom donates \$3 million to World Scout Foundation

Saudi Minister of Education and President of the Saudi Arabian Boy Scouts Association, Prince Faisal bin Mohammed, delivered a \$3 million donation to King Carl XVI Gustaf of Sweden, Honorary Chairman of the World Scout Foundation, at a May 8 ceremony in Boston, Massachusetts. The donation will support the Gifts for Peace program, an initiative created in November 2001 under the patronage of Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz. The initiative is the World Scout Foundation's key centennial program for all Scouts to tackle local issues and make a difference in their communities. It includes Scouts from more than 100 countries. This latest donation brought the Kingdom's total contribution to Gifts for Peace to approximately \$7 million.



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ADVANCED TECHNOLOGIES FORUM HELD IN RIYADH

WASHINGTON, DC [April 30, 2009] – Minister of Education Prince Faisal bin Abdullah bin Muhammed Al-Saud inaugurated the “Advanced Technologies Forum (ATF) 2009” in Riyadh on April 26. The event, held under the patronage of King Abdullah, was organized by the King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology (KACST) and featured 45 renowned speakers from around the world.

During his remarks, Prince Faisal praised King Abdullah, Crown Prince Sultan and Second Deputy Prime Minister Prince Nayef for their support of educational and technological endeavors.

He cited the establishment of the King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST); the announcement by KACST of \$2.14 billion of new investments in science, technology and innovation in the Kingdom; and the projects of the King Abdulaziz and His Companions Foundation for Giftedness and Creativity.

Prince Faisal noted these efforts have made it possible for the Kingdom to achieve concrete, significant progress in the building of advanced industries and a knowledge-based society.

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Saudi Arabia Bestows Gift to World Scout Foundation

Minister of Education Presents \$3 Million Donation on Behalf of the Kingdom

WASHINGTON [May 9, 2009] – The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's Minister of Education and President of the Saudi Arabian Boy Scouts Association, HH Prince Faisal bin Abdullah bin Mohammed, yesterday delivered a \$3 million donation to King Carl XVI Gustaf of Sweden, Honorary Chairman of the World Scout Foundation. The donation will support the Gifts for Peace program, an initiative created under the patronage of Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz in November 2001 at a Scouting conference in Riyadh.

"King Abdullah is committed to peace, and his initiatives – including the Arab Peace Plan, the Interfaith Dialogue Initiative and Gifts for Peace – aim to bring people together in peace," stated Prince Faisal.

The Gifts for Peace program is the World Scout Foundation's key centennial program for all Scouts to tackle local issues and make a difference in their communities. It includes Scouts in more than 100 countries. This latest donation from Saudi Arabia brought the Kingdom's total contribution to Gifts for Peace to approximately \$7 million since the program's inception in 2001.

"Gifts for Peace, which his Majesty King Abdullah so kindly initiated a few years ago, has done a fantastic job of reaching out to promote tolerance around the world," stated King Gustaf.

The Boy Scouts of America (BSA) recently signed a historic agreement with the Saudi Arabian Boy Scouts Association to participate in a youth and leader exchange program to further promote understanding of different cultures.

Following a breakfast with Scouts from the Boston Minuteman Council of the Boy Scouts of America today, Prince Faisal joined King Gustaf during the Volvo Ocean Race while touring the Boston Fan Pier.

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SAUDI ARABIA DONATES \$3 MILLION TO WORLD SCOUT FOUNDATION

Donation Supports Gifts for Peace Program to Promote Cultural Understanding

WASHINGTON [May 8, 2009] – On behalf of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Saudi Minister of Education and President of the Saudi Arabian Boy Scouts Association, HH Prince Faisal bin Abdullah bin Mohammed, today is delivering a \$3 million donation to Swedish King Carl XVI Gustaf, Honorary Chairman of the World Scout Foundation, to support the Gifts for Peace program. Gifts for Peace was created under the patronage of Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz in November 2001 at a Scouting Conference in Riyadh.

“Gifts for Peace is a truly worthy program and represents an extension of Saudi Arabia efforts to promote peace and cultural understanding worldwide,” said Saudi Ambassador to the United States Adel A. Al-Jubeir. “Through Gifts for Peace, King Abdullah and King Gustaf have already inspired more than ten million young people in 110 countries to work for peace and understanding in their local communities.”

The Gifts for Peace program is the World Scout Foundation’s key centennial program for all Scouts to tackle local issues and make a difference in their communities. These Gifts for Peace are gifts of education, understanding, tolerance and respect for others, given by Scouts in the form of community projects to other young people and their communities to help to build a better world. This latest donation from Saudi Arabia will bring the Kingdom’s total contribution to Gifts for Peace to approximately \$7 million since the program’s inception in 2001.

The Boy Scouts of America (BSA) recently signed a historic agreement with the Saudi Arabian Boy Scouts Association to participate in a youth and leader exchange program to further promote understanding of different cultures.

In addition to the Gifts for Peace program, which already includes Scouts in more than 100 countries, the BSA, through its Good Turn for America program, is focusing on supporting issues connected to food, shelter and good health habits; Scouts in South Africa are working on an HIV/AIDS awareness project; Scouts in Egypt are addressing child labor; Scouts in Saudi Arabia are working to develop inter-cultural and inter-religious understanding; Scouts in New Zealand are working on health issues and tackling youth suicide; Scouts in Brazil are working to disarm young people and tackle violence in the home and on the streets; and Scouts in Namibia are combating domestic violence and the abuse of women and children.

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SAUDI ARABIA

King Abdullah makes major appointments, reconstitutes judiciary

King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz issued a number of Royal Decrees on February 14, making the following changes in the composition of the Council of Ministers: Prince Faisal bin Abdullah bin Mohammed has been appointed Minister of Education; Dr. Abdullah Al-Rabeeah Minister of Health; Dr. Mohammed bin Abdulkareem Al-Issa Minister of Justice; Dr. Abdulaziz Khojah Minister of Culture and Information; and Nourah Al-Fayez Deputy Minister of Education for Women's Education. Ms. Al-Fayez is the Kingdom's first female minister.

King Abdullah also appointed former Justice Minister Abdullah Al-Asheikh chairman of Majlis Al-Shura (Consultative Council); Dr. Saleh Bin-Humaid chairman of the Supreme Judiciary Council; Abdulaziz Al-Humain head of the Commission for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice; Abdulrahman bin Abdulaziz Al-Kelya chief justice of the Supreme Court; Muhammad Al-Jasser governor of the Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency (SAMA); Faisal bin Abdulrahman Al-Muammar Deputy Minister of Education; Dr. Bandar bin Abdulmohsen Al-Qanawi executive director of National Guard Health Affairs; and Khaled bin Abdullah Al-Sabti Deputy Minister of Education for Boys' Affairs.

King Abdullah appointed Lt. Gen. Hussein bin Abdullah Al-Qubail Deputy Chief of staff and Maj. Gen. Abdulrahman bin Abdullah Al-Murshid commander of the Land Forces. Other major appointments include: Ibrahim bin Shayie Al-Hoqail, chairman of the Court of Grievances; Ali bin Abdulrahman Al-Hamad, Deputy Chairman of the Court of Grievances; Bandar bin Mohammed Al-Alban, chairman of the Human Rights Commission; Mohammed bin Ahmed Al-Kenhal, president of the Saudi Food and Drugs Authority; and Mohammed bin Fahd Al-Dossary, chairman of the Higher Administrative Court.

King Abdullah reconstituted the Council of Senior Ulema (Muslim Scholars), appointed members to the Supreme Judicial Council and Supreme Court and extended the terms of others on Saturday.

The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques relieved Sheikh Dr. Abdulaziz bin Mohammad Al-Abdulmunem, upon his own request, from his post as Secretary General of the Commission of Senior Ulema, and appointed Sheikh Dr. Fahd bin Saad Al-Majed as his replacement. Grand Mufti Sheikh Abdulaziz bin Abdullah Al Aasheikh was reappointed chairman of the Commission of Senior Ulema.

Sheikh Dr. Yousuf bin Mohammed Ali Al-Ghafes, a member of the Standing Committee for Research and Fatwa, an affiliate of Commission of Senior Ulema, was

relieved from his post upon his request. King Abdullah also extended the term of members of the committee for four years, effective 3/3/1430 H. (February 27, 2009).

Sheikh Dr. Abdullah bin Mohammed bin Ibrahim Al-Asheikh was relieved of his post as Minister of Justice and appointed chairman of the Majlis Al-Shura (Consultative Council); Sheikh Dr. Saleh bin Abdullah Bin Humeid was appointed chairman of the Supreme Judicial Council at the rank of minister; Sheikh Abdulrahman bin Abdulaziz Al-Colleyia was named chairman of the Supreme Court at the rank of minister; Sheikh Mohammed bin Fahd bin Saad Al-Dosari was appointed president of the Supreme Administrative Court; Sheikh Dr. Mohammad bin Abdullah Al-Shanqiti was relieved from his post as chief of the Court of Grievances, upon his request, and Sheikh Ibrahim bin Shayle Al-Haqil appointed to the post. Sheikh Ali bin Abdulrahman bin Abdulaziz Al-Hammad was appointed Deputy Chief of Grievances Court.

King Abdullah also relieved Sheikh Ibrahim bin Abdullah Al-Ghaith, director general of the Commission for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, at his own request, from his post, and appointed Sheikh Abdulaziz bin Humayen Al-Humayen as his replacement.

King Abdullah also appointed members of the Majlis Al-Shura.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

King Abdullah, Chinese President Hu hold bilateral meetings

King Abdullah and visiting Chinese President Hu Jintao held bilateral meetings in Riyadh last week. President Hu arrived in Riyadh February 10 on a three-day official visit to the Kingdom.

King Abdullah expressed his eagerness to promote bilateral relations between Saudi Arabia and China and noted that his first official visit abroad as King was to China. King Abdullah and President Hu also discussed developments in the Middle East, agreeing upon the importance of achieving a fair and comprehensive peace settlement that will establish an independent and viable Palestinian state.

During the visit, a number of agreements and Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) were signed by Saudi and Chinese officials. The agreements included a contract with China's Company for Building Railways for the construction of the Holy Places Train Project; an MoU between the Saudi Arabian Standards Organization (SASO) and the Chinese State General Administration for Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine; and an MoU between the King Abdulaziz Public Library and Beijing University on the establishment of a branch of the Library at Beijing University.

ENERGY

Minister of Petroleum Al-Naimi cautions low oil prices unsustainable

Minister of Petroleum and Mineral Resources Ali Al-Naimi reaffirmed the Kingdom's commitment to fostering long-term energy market stability during an address

Tuesday at Houston's Energy Conference and warned that current low oil prices are just as unsustainable as last year's stratospherically high levels. "If today's low prices continue long enough, they will sow the seeds for future price spikes and volatility." He explained that oil prices must be low enough to facilitate economic growth, while high enough to spur industry investment, encourage energy efficiency and justify production from marginal fields, non-conventional sources and renewables.

Minister Al-Naimi singled out three "newly emerging challenges" that have lately contributed to energy market volatility: globalized capital markets, the emergence of energy as an asset class, and climate change. All of these challenges, he said, require global cooperation. "For over half a century, Saudi Arabia and the United States have shared a commitment to work together in areas of mutual interest," he stated. "Our long-term relationship in energy has paid great dividends for the health of the global economy, the stability of oil markets and for our respective societies. Working together we can build on these successes to provide the foundation for a strong, sustainable economic recovery and a bright future."

HEALTH

Conjoined Egyptian twins arrive in Riyadh for surgical separation

Two conjoined twins from Egypt, Mahmoud and Hassan, arrived in the Kingdom on Tuesday in a special Medevac plane to undergo an operation to separate them at the King Abdulaziz Medical City Hospital.

In the latest such operation at the hospital, two Iraqi twins, Ayad and Zeyad, were separated on October 25, 2008 by a medical team headed by Dr. Abdullah Al-Rabeeah, former chief executive officer of the medical city and current Minister of Health.

The first conjoined twin separation surgery in the Kingdom was performed successfully on December 31, 1990, at Riyadh's King Faisal Specialist Hospital. Since then, 13 more sets of conjoined twins have been separated.



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